

## **Excerpt from the minutes of the Fire Service Update given to the Bath City Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

Question Robin Kerr – Could a response be given on fire safety around party houses. The Council are holding a scrutiny day in February on this topic. Brighton and Hove Council are ahead of us in dealing with these issues, East Sussex Fire Service has reported that they have powers to shut down premises.

Stephen Quinton, Avon Fire and Rescue, Group Manager – Risk Reduction responded:

- The fire service does have a responsibility to carry out fire inspections at party houses, including Air BnB lets - "Party houses are regulated". It was stated that there no inspection issues that are "too difficult".
- Sleeping accommodation is a priority for fire inspections.
- Named unlicensed party houses have been added to its list for checks. There were no specific complaints about any of those properties and there is no evidence to suggest that party houses are any more dangerous than licensed premises.
- 28 properties have been inspected, 5 turned out not to be party houses. None have received any enforcement action. Only one was assessed above level 3 of fire hazard (= advisory), requiring addition of some door closers and smoke alarms.
- A single exception was assessed as level 5 (= the worst) and would have been closed down that night, had not the owner managed to install a wireless detection system before the deadline.
- There are 320 Air BnB's advertised in B&NES area which provide a challenge as the only way to contact them is to book a room or email them.
- There is nothing to stop owners from illegally blocking or removing fire safety measures (e.g. door closers) once the inspectors have gone.
- There are also 8,000 businesses in B&NES, and a number of care homes, which are a bigger priority for the fire services.
- A premise above a shop was facing prosecution, on return to the property the landlord had installed a fire protection system that covered the issues that had been picked up in the initial inspection.
- Once an inspection is carried out the premise is added to a plan but the reality is that a long time passes before a return visit is carried out.

- The fire service has only two fire safety officers to cover B&NES, this is why a risk-based fire safety assessment system is run.
- It was disappointing to see a reference to Grenfell in relation to party house fire safety in Bath. We will be doing everything in our power to keep you updated.”

Cllr Rob Appleyard felt that the feedback that had been provided was of a high quality and extremely useful. The language that is used future discussion needs to be responsible and measured.